

on location

FALL – WINTER 2022



new life **FOR WOMEN** IN BANGLADESH

by IM Global Consultant Jeanine White

When Walt and I first arrived in Bangladesh forty-five years ago, we thought our mission was reaching out to lead men to faith in Jesus. We thought the men would then lead their wives to faith. Years went by and we realized that this was not happening. Later we learned that one of the few reasons a woman can divorce a man is if he becomes a Christian.

Instead we invited the group of men who had come to faith in Jesus to bring their wives to our house. That day I taught the women from the Gospel of John. I had the joyful experience of sharing with them that the first people Jesus met after his resurrection from the dead were women. At

the end of the day I prayed with them that if any of them had come to faith in Jesus, she would pray to receive him. Afterward, one of them said, "I have never traveled this far from home." She had come seventeen miles from her house on the train. "I did not know why my husband wanted me to come here. It is as if I had been blind but now I see." She was one who could read. We were later told that when the women went home, she would read the Bible to the others while they did chores together. Since then, house churches have been established in the areas where these women live.

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a message from

SHARON KOH

Dear IM Family,

At IM's core for two hundred years has been a commitment to make God's kingdom known "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It's why the first missionaries journeyed across the seas, and why we remain committed to sending out and supporting our global servants today.

Jesus taught us that "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32)

We know from our own lives as well as the biblical stories that God shows a tendency to use the small and seemingly insignificant—like that tiny mustard seed—so that God's power might be all the better demonstrated through us. And like that tiny seed sprouting into the largest tree, the way in which God's kingdom grows is often surprising—not what we would have expected.

It can feel sometimes like the little bit that I have to offer God and God's kingdom is so insignificant that it can't make a difference. "Why would God use my _____, if God has so-and-so's _____ at God's disposal?" Can you imagine if Samuel or Zaccheus or the unnamed boy with five loaves and two fish thought this? Can you imagine if all those women who followed and listened to Jesus' teachings thought this? Can you imagine if every global servant thought this and held back what God has called them, called us, to offer? The kingdom of God would be such a different place!

I am so thankful for the IM family over the years, as we participate together in God's surprising, ongoing, flourishing kingdom work together. I pray that God will use our little sacrifices and small offerings to God's glory, and I pray that each one of us will have a deepened and renewed sense of our small piece in the puzzle. May the stories in this issue of *On Location* inspire you to lift your gifts, talents, abilities and resources to the Lord as an offering, and may God knit all these together until it is on earth as it is in heaven.

If in response to this newsletter you'd like to give a gift to support IM's General Fund, you can use the return envelope provided.

Thank you for seeing the value in tiny mustard seeds, and thank you for offering your mustard seeds. May your mustard seed faith continue to grow and flourish through our Lord.

Rev. Sharon Koh
Executive Director / CEO



Inspired by what you read in this issue? If you would like to equip IM global servants to share the gospel, please use the enclosed reply envelope to send your gift of support or donate online: www.internationalministries.org. You can help us reduce costs when you receive an electronic instead of print version of this newsletter. To do that, create (or log into) your account at portal.internationalministries.org or email us at imdonorservices@internationalministries.org with your name and address.

We welcome comments on Facebook at International Ministries—American Baptist.

For more information, contact zdripps@internationalministries.org.





Jeanine White

new life **FOR WOMEN IN BANGLADESH**

Continued from cover

Because of changing political climates, our residential visa was refused. Several years later, Walt worked with a few other men to establish a development organization that was focused on teaching illiterate people to read, save their money collectively, and develop income-generating businesses from funds they saved. The majority of the people who completed the literacy training were women!

Women in Bangladesh have been marginalized because they are women. Historically, girls have not been given priority to get an education. If a girl had a brother and there were limited resources in her family, her brother would be given the opportunity to go to school. If a girl were going to school, she might have to stop when she got to fifth or sixth grade as it might be considered “unsafe” for her to walk to school. In some areas, for financial reasons, the girl might be given in marriage when she was thirteen or fourteen years old. She would then go to live in the home of her in-laws and have too many chores to do to have time for school.

Now, through this development work, over 20,000 women have learned to read, write Bengali, and do basic math. They have started businesses so that their families could send their children to school. Here is one woman’s story:

As a teenager, I was given in marriage to a young man who worked finding whatever job was available. Some days he rode a bicycle rickshaw. Other days he worked bent over planting rice seedlings. One day he was killed in an accident unloading logs from an ox cart. Suddenly I was left with no income and two small children. Living in a small part of a relative’s house, I wondered how I and my children could survive. Development workers came to my village and offered to provide teaching for a group of twenty women there. Shyly, I joined the group.



Jeanine with women in Bangladesh

As the weeks went by, I was excited to be learning to read and do math. I was amazed that although I (like the others in the group) contributed a small amount of money, the account grew. After a few months, I borrowed from the account to raise chickens. As the chickens grew, they began to lay eggs. My children had better nutrition by eating the eggs, and I was able to sell some. During the second year of my training I was reading the booklets made available and learning to plant a kitchen garden, learning my legal rights, and learning how to better care for my children. I paid back the money from the first loan and took a bigger loan to buy a goat. As I made more money, I was able to live in my own small house and send my children to school. As my children grew in school, I grew in knowledge, skills, and experience. I now have confidence and take an active part in my community, standing up for the rights of women and looking out for the welfare of those who have suffered loss.

There are Bengali women living in village areas who lead these projects. They are my heroes. They work six days a week overseeing the groups that meet in their areas. In spite of the pandemic, I have been able to lead some of these women in Bible studies by Zoom. Over the past year, we have been taking a close look at who Jesus was, what he did, and what he taught. My goal is that these women will recognize that they can lead Bible studies by carefully looking at the Holy Bible and considering what it says.

Jeanine White and her husband, Walt, serve as International Ministries global consultants, training teams working with historically underserved religious groups that include pastors, missionaries, development workers, and partners.



a home **FOR A SEMINARY AMONG** displaced people

On the border of Thailand and Myanmar, Kawthoolei Hope Theological Seminary is training leaders and peacemakers in refugee camps.

About seven years ago, Dr. Saw Wado had a dream to establish a seminary for deeper theological training among the camps of displaced Kawthoolei Karen people living on the border of Myanmar and Thailand.

For more than three decades, many Karen people have been displaced and are living as refugees on a long swath of the Thailand border because of ongoing political turmoil in Myanmar. This seminary could be a platform both to build Karen leadership and to train peacemakers in a context deeply impacted by conflict.

Although Kawthoolei Hope Theological Seminary (KHTS) was birthed in 2015, it remained homeless. Already working in partnership with International Ministries, Saw Wado asked IM Area Director for Southeast Asia and Japan Leslie Turley if there was any way in which International Ministries could help.

“IM builds relationships with very loyal donors, who love the work our global servants and partners do, and who want to participate in that work,” says IM’s Associate Executive Director for Mission Advancement Zofia Dripps. “We have a process through which we can give our partners visibility and help connect them with our donors.”

Shortly after IM’s Mission Advancement team posted this project on IM’s website, a longtime IM donor surprised Leslie with a message to say that he had just donated \$12,000—all the funding Saw Wado had requested to construct a home for the seminary. Amazed and delighted, Leslie’s immediate reaction was “Thank you, Jesus!”

Building work began in 2020 to construct classrooms, dormitories, a cafeteria/kitchen, and a library. On March 20, 2022, staff and students celebrated the opening of the seminary’s new permanent home.

Fully accredited, KHTS is growing rapidly, with 71 current students. The seminary offers a Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Socio-Cultural and Political Transformation, and Master of Arts in Ministry. IM recently appointed new Global Servants Eric and Yuree Lembke to serve at the seminary in teaching, technological support, evangelism and discipleship. They are currently raising the funds needed to begin their ministry there.

“The placement of the seminary is unique,” explains Leslie, who visited the new buildings last spring.



Some of the seminary's students

"It's right on the border, on the side of a valley. Most days you can see from there the helicopters and fighter jets dropping bombs in Myanmar. That is why this work is so important—a big part of the seminary's work is focused on how to build peace. I am thankful for the long history of IM that has continued to focus on coming alongside our partners in ministry."

For Saw Wado, KHTS stands not only on a boundary line between two countries but exists to push the boundaries of what is possible, as the Karen people stand in their faith in God. "I want to see KHTS lead. I see KHTS in the international platform, preaching, leading workshops, lecturing in universities, and changing landscapes for refugees. This, on the one hand, can be absurdity but on the other it is courage. We will build a bridge for Karen unity, we will alter the conditions of the refugees, the migrants, and the diaspora, we will transform our geo-socio-political landscape, we will globalize the Karen identity. Don't tell me this is impossible. This is hope. We shall overcome, and the future will be as bright as the promises of God. KHTS will be, and we will be, the agents of hope."



Global Servants Eric and Yuree Lembke are raising funds to serve at KHTS.



A MISSION-MINDED church will grow

IM's World Mission Offering provides an opportunity for churches and individuals to engage in God's mission around the world.

Pictured above: Mary (right) and the Grace Church mission team with former Global Servants Jill and Mike Lowery

"A mission-minded church will grow," says Mary Funk, who heads the mission team at Grace Church in Chehalis, Washington. Nestled in a small town, the church has continued to grow during the pandemic in attendance as well as giving.

"The irony is because of COVID we no longer pass an offering plate. We had said to ourselves, how do we get people to give without passing around an offering plate? But since we stopped, we've received an abundance. We are just amazed at the people's response."

Mary is looking forward to the ways in which her team can use International Ministries' World Mission Offering materials this fall to get even more people in the church engaged in what God is doing around the world.

She still recalls one Sunday many years ago when a missionary couple visited the church she and her husband were attending. "We realized—if we don't send that pledge, they don't have it. They just don't have the funds. That was the beginning of our experience of tithing."

When she got involved in her current church's mission team, Mary and the team encouraged the church to begin to give for specific IM global servants—ones the congregation could meet in person and get to know.

"What makes the difference is the personal relationships we have. Sarah Matos grew up thirty miles from us. Our pastor [Mark Wilks] has known her since she was a young girl. Our women's circle has done Zoom meetings with Ketly Pierre. Several of our small groups have adopted an IM missionary as prayer partners. Our children are helping to raise funds for the children in Goma [Democratic Republic of the Congo] in our Vacation Bible School through Ann Clemmer. It went over so well last year that we are doing it again, and

Ann very nicely sent over a series of videos we could use. When we can make it more personal, the church's response is really great."

Each year, when Grace Church features the World Mission Offering as their "Mission of the Month," Mary and the mission team make use of the free materials IM offers. Mary hangs up the map of global servants in a church hallway, adding stars to show where Grace Church's missionaries are serving. They use the prayer guide with prayer requests from the global servants and share one request a day through the church's prayer chain. She especially enjoys seeing and sharing the World Mission Offering videos. "My goal is to get more people to know what's happening," she explains.

This year, International Ministries is also providing a free Leaders' Guide, with a prayer guide, sermon guide, children's sermon, and more. All resources are available at www.worldmissionoffering.org.



International Ministries uses World Mission Offering gifts to fund its home office operations and global servant support services, as well as to ensure that all of IM's ministries are supported.

"We've seen the personal commitment of the missionaries—all the sacrifices they are going through," Mary says. "The World Mission Offering is important because without International Ministries we wouldn't have these missionaries. The missionaries are our voice overseas."

project

SPOTLIGHTS



MEXICO: MULTIPURPOSE CENTER FOR MIGRANTS

Through this project led by IM Global Servants Deliris and Moise Carrión-Joseph, you can help meet the needs of migrants in Tijuana. In 2021, Tijuana received about two hundred Haitians daily seeking asylum. A multipurpose center will address the immediate holistic needs migrants have as they build new lives in Tijuana, including temporary shelter, resources to educate children, language and computer skills training, and more.



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: WOMEN'S SURGICAL CARE

You can provide life-saving surgeries for women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Women in the DRC often delay going to the hospital because they lack financial resources. For pregnant women, this delay in accessing medical services may lead to difficulties that result in harm to the baby or the mother. Through this project led by Associate Global Servants Kathy and Tim Rice you can provide funds for cesarean sections, hysterectomies, and other surgeries at the Vanga Evangelical Hospital.



SOUTHEAST ASIA: CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Help train pastors and seminarians in basic business skills to develop economic opportunities in their communities in Southeast Asia. This project, managed by Global Servant Wati Longchar, in partnership with North East Christian University, offers two six-month online certificate training programs to teach the skills needed to create income-generating enterprises relevant to their context. IM Global Consultants Ann and Bruce Borquist are the program's lead teachers.



NICARAGUA: PARENTING WITH LOVE

You can help empower mothers to facilitate breastfeeding, parent-child bonding, and early childhood stimulation through this program that seeks to decrease the long-term impact of the Nicaraguan crisis on children and their families. In conflict settings, pregnant women, mothers, and children bear the brunt of ill health and death. This project is managed by IM Global Servant Dr. David Parajón and AMOS Health and Hope.

To give to these or other projects, visit
www.internationalministries.org/category/projects

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